DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 116 CS 217 717

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TITLE	Guiding Curriculum Decisions for Middle-Grades Language Arts.
INSTITUTION	Education Development Center, Inc., Newton, MA.
ISBN	ISBN-0-325-00418-8
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	120p.; "With assistance from Anne Shure."
AVAILABLE FROM	Heinemann, 88 Post Road West, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881 ($18). Tel: 800-793-2154 (Toll Free); Fax: 800-847-0938 (Toll Free); Web site: http://www.heinemann.com.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Curriculum; *Decision Making; *Language Arts; Middle Schools; *Professional Development
IDENTIFIERS	*Curriculum Choice; Curriculum Implementation; Vignettes

ABSTRACT

Many questions are on the minds of middle school teachers, principals, and curriculum leaders as they respond to a growing pressure to produce better educated students. Some of the questions are the following: Which language arts curriculum will sustain the interest of middle grades students? How can educators be certain the curriculum meets state standards? and How can educators learn to use these materials? This handbook was designed to guide educators through the language arts curriculum selection process, helping them choose and use curricula that promote high standards of student achievement. Drawing on the expertise of the authors as well as interviews with dozens of practitioners, the handbook presents a framework for decision making, provides an overview of the curriculum decision-making process, and contains detailed information on a variety of language arts curricula and curriculum resources. In the handbook, a set of critical questions for curriculum decision making are posed that corresponds to a framework focused on three priorities: academic rigor, equity, and developmental appropriateness. Vignettes in the handbook, drawn from interviews with practitioners, suggest not only what exemplary curricula look like in action, but also the kinds of professional development that help teachers implement them. Also included are profiles of quality curricula that illustrate the qualities identified in the framework, as well annotations of 40 additional curricula and professional development resources available in print and online. (NKA)

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